A HISTORY OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA TO 1876

by

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ABSTRACT

Anyone who takes the time to look into the history of Jacksonville, Florida will discover, perhaps to his surprise, that it is as exciting and dramatic as the history of the United States itself. A few hardy pioneers cleared the virgin forest along the part of the St. Johns River called "Cow Ford" and erected their crude homes. Soon, one man persuaded the others that streets should be surveyed and the settlement incorporated as a community. After a slow start, Jacksonville, as it was now named, grew and soon there was talk of railroads, banks, and newspapers. Almost immediately the Seminole War intervened, and plans were suspended. Seven years later Jacksonville took up where she left off. After a decade of tragic epidemics and one large fire, the city by 1860 was known as a tourist resort and shipping center for timber, cotton, and naval stores. All this changed soon after the Civil War began. Jacksonville was invaded four times by the Federal armies, and by the end of the war, most of the city had been burned on different

occasions by both Confederates and Federals. Rebuilding started immediately, and Jacksonville made an amazing recovery despite the tremendous difficulties of the Reconstruction period. By 1876 the city was entering the most gay and colorful period of her history when she became the favorite gathering place for winter tourists from the North.

This constant cycle of struggling against adversity and rising above it has characterized Jacksonville's later history as well as the earlier. Always, however, there has been the right combination of resourceful, farsighted citizens and the natural advantages of location and climate.

The author has done general reading on Florida history, the history of East Florida in particular. Several books and pamphlets of a promotional nature have been written about Jacksonville in the past, but they tend to glorify the city's advantages in the hope of attracting visitors. Newspapers, such as are available for the period, provided some insight into the times; however, much of the newspaper space in that day of slow communication was devoted to serial stories, news from the North, and advertisements. Because of the many fires and the two wars, there are large gaps in the years for which newspapers are available. The Official Records of the Civil War were helpful in following some of the military activities in Jacksonville during those years, as were letters from union soldiers who were stationed in Jacksonville from time to time.

This thesis is an effort to present a readable, accurate, and scholarly account of early Jacksonville history, emphasizing the part the city played in the Civil War. In addition, the author hopes to show that the development and growth of Jacksonville were largely the result of enterprising individuals from many sections of the country.

PREFACE

Originally, my purpose in writing this paper was to relate the role Jacksonville played in the Civil War. The ensuing research and study led to a keen interest in the history of the city itself, its beginnings, early development, tribulations, and triumphs. Therefore, the scope of the study widened to include several eras instead of one.

It begins with the first activity of the white man in the area and concludes with the year 1876 when Jacksonville, along with the rest of Florida, could safely turn optimistic eyes toward the future, free at last from war and political bondage.

It is my hope that a reader of this paper may find in its pages the true spirit of a great city, destined to survive not only because of physical advantages, but also because of the determination and awareness of her citizens at every stage of growth. Fires, diseases, wars, and depressions did not dampen the enthusiasm and courage of

the people of Jacksonville, whose faith in the city's potential was so strong that they unhesitatingly rebuilt their homes and businesses many times.

For advice and guidance in regard to source material, I am especially indebted to Miss Dena Snodgrass of the Jacksonville Historical Society. The librarians of the Haydon Burns Library in Jacksonville and of the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History in Gainesville, Florida were also most gracious and helpful. In addition, I am grateful to my wife, Irma Jane, for her help and understanding while I was doing the research.

Stewart B. Dowless

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

A HISTORY OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA TO 1876

Chapter I

A CITY IS BORN

Seventy years after Columbus' landing in the New World, and nearly fifty years after Ponce de Leon's discovery of Florida for Spain, a party of French Protestants was sent across the Atlantic to locate a place suitable for colonization. Led by Jean Ribault, they reached the Florida coast near the mouth of the St. Johns River about twenty-three miles east of the present city of Jacksonville.[1] The French named their new-found body of water the River of May because it was discovered on May 1, 1562. After two days of exploring and exchanging gifts with the Indians, Ribault and his party set up a stone marker on the south side of the river near the present town of Mayport, proclaiming possession of the country for France.

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[1]Branch Cabell and A. J. Hanna, The St. Johns: A Parade of Diversities (New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1943), p. 20.

Two years later, two hundred fifty French colonists arrived in Florida, settled at St. Johns Bluff about five miles up the river from Mayport, and built Fort Caroline. The following year, just as five hundred more Frenchmen arrived at Fort Caroline, Pedro Menendez from Spain landed at St. Augustine. His mission was to explore the coast and to destroy the settlements of other nations. Moving northward, Menendez and his men attacked Fort Caroline and drove the French out of Florida. The Spanish then ruled Florida for nearly two hundred years, but they made no effort to settle or develop the area that later became Jacksonville.

During this period the native Indians used a trail from the lower east coast of Florida through New Smyrna, St. Augustine, and across the St. Johns River at one of their various fording places which they called Wacca Pilatka, meaning "cows crossing over." After crossing the river, the trail took a northwesterly course.

In 1763 England gained possession of Florida by treaty with Spain. By the following year, nearly all the Spaniards had left. The English developed the Indian trail and called it the King's Highway. This road became a significant factor in the development of East Florida. Several English indigo plantations appeared above the river, named St. Johns by the English, and a ferry was in operation at "Wacca Pilatka" by 1774.[2] The English name for this fording place

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[2]William Bartram, The Travels of William Bartram, ed. Mark Van Doren (New York: Dover Publications, 1928), p. 82.

was simply Cow Ford. The land on the north side of the river at the Cow Ford was the site of the present city of Jacksonville.

With the end of the Revolutionary War, England lost interest in Florida and gave it back to Spain in exchange for several islands. When the British left in 1783, the area fell into ruin, the abandoned plantations deteriorated, and the King's Highway grew up in tall weeds.

The Spanish, however, were more inclined toward settlement than they had been during their previous occupation of Florida and after 1790, encouraged American immigration.[3] In 1791 Robert Pritchard obtained a Spanish land grant of four hundred fifty acres and became the first white settler on the site of Jacksonville.[4] He cleared some of the virgin forest, erected buildings, and planted crops, only to die a few years later. His heirs kept up the property until the War of 1812 when they abandoned it. There were other settlers who had Spanish grants in the general area, now included in the suburbs of Jacksonville. Lewis Zachariah Hogans obtained, through marriage to Mrs. Maria Taylor, possession of one of these grants, a portion of which formerly had been owned by Pritchard. Hogans built a log cabin home at Cow Ford in 1816 and became the first

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[3]Kathryn Abbey Hanna, Florida, Land of Change (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941), p. 100. Cited hereafter as Hanna.

[4]T. Frederick Davis, History of Jacksonville, Florida and Vicinity 1513-1924 (St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1925), p. 40. Cited hereafter as T. F. Davis.

permanent settler. The land he farmed is now the center of downtown Jacksonville.

Juan Maestre took possession of a land grant next to Hogans' in 1817, built a cabin and put in a crop, but moved away the next summer. He eventually sold out to John Brady who lived in the cabin and became the second permanent settler in 1818. About the following year William Dawson and Stephen Buckles came from Georgia and built a store. Isaiah David Hart became the next settler at Cow Ford when he and his brother, Daniel C. Hart, moved there in 1821.[5]

During that year the United States acquired Florida, and travel from the Northern states to East Florida over the King's Highway increased. Isaiah Hart conceived the idea of developing a town and after much discussion, finally persuaded Brady to donate some land for that purpose. Because Mr. Hart was the originator of the idea, he is credited with being the founder of Jacksonville.[6] The name of the community, in honor of General Andrew Jackson, was suggested by John Warren, a resident of the vicinity.[7] Figure 1 is a map of Jacksonville, as originally surveyed. At that time, there were one store, one inn, and three houses, with a total population of fifteen residents.[8]

Later that same year, Jacksonville was established as the county seat of Duval County. Where there had already

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[5] Ibid., p. 53.

[6] Ibid., p. 57.

[7] Ibid., p. 56.

[8] Ibid., p. 500.

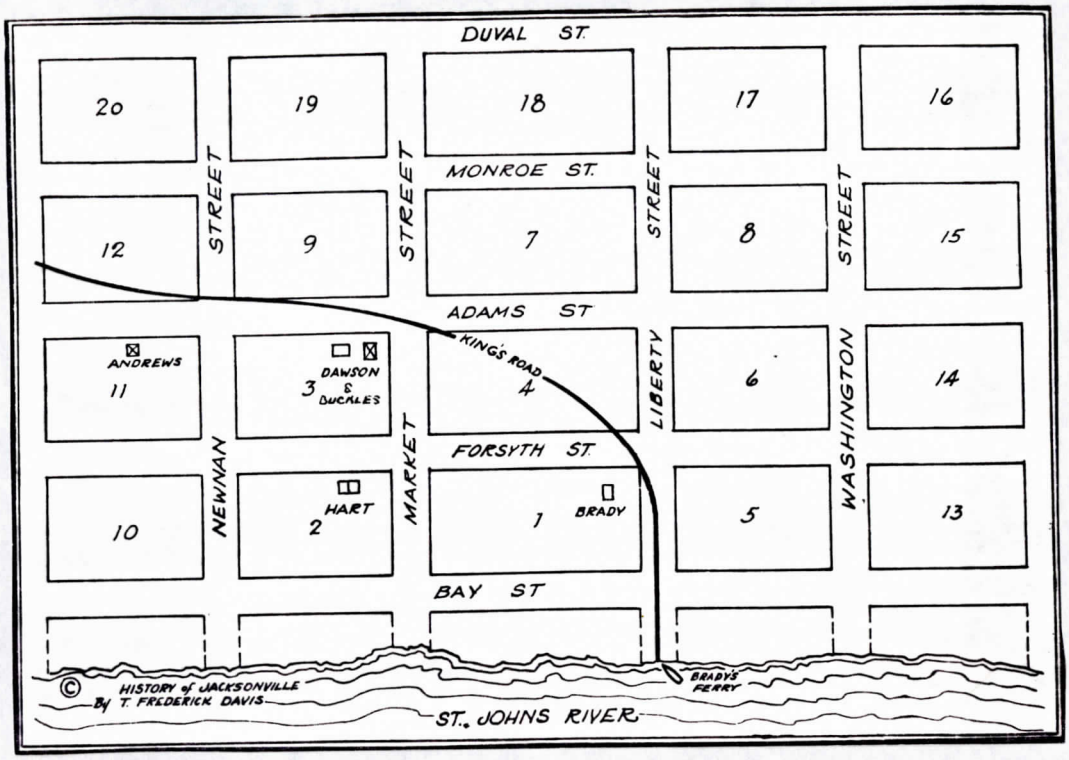

Figure 1

JACKSONVILLE AS ORIGINALLY SURVEYED IN 1822

been some traffic through Jacksonville via the King's Road, now it increased considerably. "Court Day" brought not only judges and lawyers, but everyone from the surrounding countryside into Jacksonville whether or not they had legal business to conduct.[9] The inn, which was actually only a frame house, was filled to capacity and people were bedded down on the floors in the few cabins or loaned a blanket from the store's stock. When weather permitted, some slept outside. Often visitors were dependent upon the hospitality of not only the houses in town but the one or two on the south side of the river. Court was held outside until 1825 when John Warren built a two-story building on the Northwest corner of Bay and Newnan Streets and allowed the court to use the upper floor.

In spite of the increase in the numbers of people passing through and showing up on "Court Day," Jacksonville grew slowly during these first years. However, in 1828 or 1829, the first steam saw mill in East Florida was built at Panama on Trout Creek north of Jacksonville, and the owner operated a brick kiln as well. This encouraged more building in Jacksonville and practically ended the log cabin era.

As news of Florida's milder climate spread, strangers from the North gradually found their way to Jacksonville

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[9]Lee Eugene Bigelow, "A History of Jacksonville, Florida" (Unpublished MS in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, Florida), chap. iv, p. 10. Pages not numbered consecutively throughout MS. Cited hereafter as Bigelow.

and added their numbers to the usual travelers and those on county business. Of these visitors who came, some decided to settle and enter into business. By 1830, the population was about one hundred.[10] In that year Mr. Hart built a boarding house at the Northwest corner of Market and Bay Streets.

The Territorial Council of 1832 incorporated Jacksonville into a town with its first charter. Jacksonville, the ninth town in the territory of Florida to be incorporated, was enlarged until it took in all the territory between Hogan's and McCoy's Creeks and as far north as about present Church Street.

The years 1832-1835 showed a greater increase in population and prosperity of Jacksonville. With about two hundred fifty people[11] in the town itself and others up and down the river who were generally wealthy for their time, Jacksonville's future looked optimistic. There were plans for a million-dollar railroad from Jacksonville to Tallahassee, as well as a bank and a newspaper (the Jacksonville Courier) already in existence.[12] In the first issue of the Jacksonville Courier, the editor described the city's present and future as he saw them:

> We find ourselves not in a great city, but in a thriving town under municipal regulation, where trade is active,

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[10] T. F. Davis, p. 500.

[11] Ibid., p. 75.

[12] Ibid., p. 74.

> industry occupied, and unusual facilities afforded to induce discerning men to locate themselves for mechanical, commercial, and professional business. . . . The County and Superior Courts for this County, hold their regular semi-annual sessions here. It is a port of entry. It has a good inland trade, and affords a good market for the productions of an extensive tract of country. There are constant communications by mails, ships, and a steamboat. In short, it is like many other thriving places at the South and West, with good advantages for improvement, and although comparatively in infancy, destined, in all human probability, to grow in business, and progress in political importance.[13]

Near the end of 1835, the Seminole Indian War began. The war lasted seven years, during which Jacksonville served as a supply depot for the troops passing through both by land and by water. A large building called Government Building was erected on Bay Street between Pine (now Main) and Laura Streets for the storage of supplies.

Settlers from the plantations in the interior of the state flocked to the towns for protection. As there were frequent Indian attacks in the country around Jacksonville, many settlers moved into the town and stayed throughout the war. In times of alarm everyone crowded into the blockhouse built at the corner of Ocean and Monroe Streets. Although the blockhouse was used several times when rumors of threatened attacks were circulated, Jacksonville was never actually attacked. The movement of people from the interior into the town increased business somewhat, but it ruined the trade Jacksonville had established with the plantations and settlers.

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[13] Jacksonville Courier, January 1, 1835.

Another effect of the war was the increase in Jacksonville's Negro population. The Indians owned slaves themselves and frequently stole Negro slaves from the whites. A number of planters in the vicinity brought their slaves into Jacksonville and built huts for them behind the town.[14]

The Indian War, while temporarily calling a halt to Jacksonville's somewhat belated progress, did produce the desirable effect of bringing many troops from Georgia and other states into Jacksonville via the King's Highway. Often they camped here while waiting transportation south. In this way, Jacksonville became known in other sections of the United States. Some of the people who were drawn to Jacksonville because of the war remained and made desirable citizens.

While Florida was engaged in fighting the Indians, the nation was hit by the Panic of 1837. Jacksonville had benefited from the era of speculation and optimism that preceded the panic and her business suffered during the hard times that accompanied it.

Another setback had occurred in 1835 when the greatest freeze on record for the area took place. The temperature on February 8 of that year was officially down to 8°, and the orange groves of the St. Johns River region were killed.

With the Indian War and the slowing down of business generally because of the hard times, Jacksonville made little

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[14]Bigelow, chap. v, p. 3.

progress from 1835- 1842. However, forces were at work that would emerge as significant to her later development. One of these, already mentioned, was the passing through of United States troops on their way to fight the Indians. Another was the building of a large sawmill near Mayport by Joseph Finegan in the late 1830's. In 1840 he sold it to Amanda Parsons from Vermont and H. H. Hoeg from Michigan. The largest sawmill in the county at the time, it became known as Parson's Mill, and helped to increase Jacksonville's business significantly.[15]

The original charter of Jacksonville was repealed, and in February, 1841, a second one granted giving additional territory. The next year this second charter was amended and further extended the town limits.[16]

Except for the years 1832-1835, Jacksonville had had little opportunity to grow and develop. Business ventures had been curtailed by both the war and the nation-wide financial panic of 1837. The town was to experience many more setbacks in her future, but as the Indian War drew to a close in 1842, Jacksonville entered a period of prosperity and progress. The years "between wars," 1843-1861, were years when the city grew and developed her individuality.

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[15] Ibid., chap. v, p. 8.

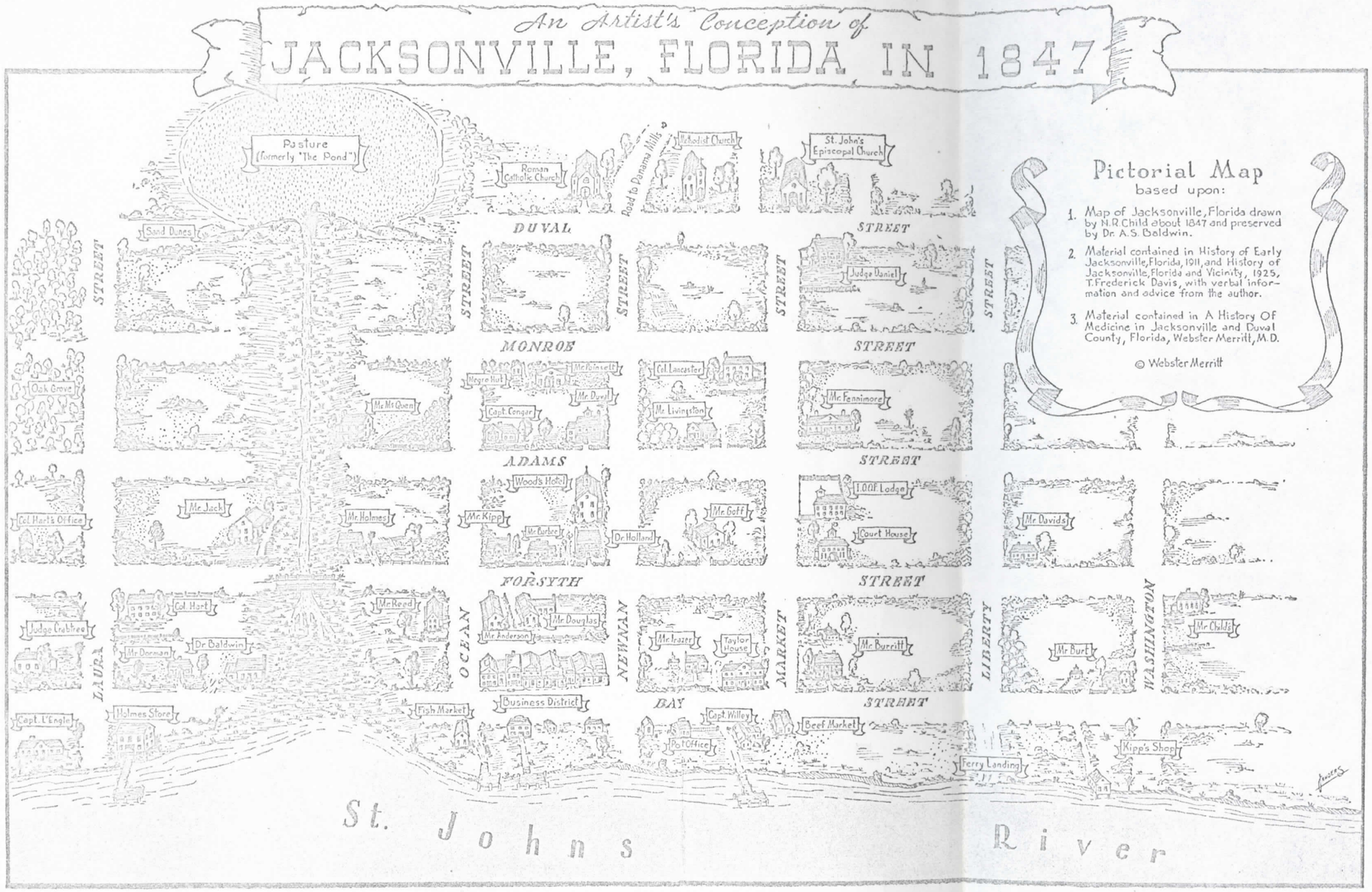
[16] Ibid., chap. v, pp. 7-8.

Chapter II

LIFE BEFORE THE WAR

The whole of Jacksonville in the 1840's and 1850's was but a very tiny segment of the downtown business district of the city as it exists today. As can be seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3, the stores that made up the business district during this period were entirely located on one block, the north side of Bay Street between Ocean and Newnan Streets. Across the street on the south side of Bay near the river's edge were located the fish market, post office, and beef market. Behind the town were the three churches--Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Episcopal. In between the business area and the churches and extending to the east and west were about thirty private dwellings, hotels, and boarding houses.

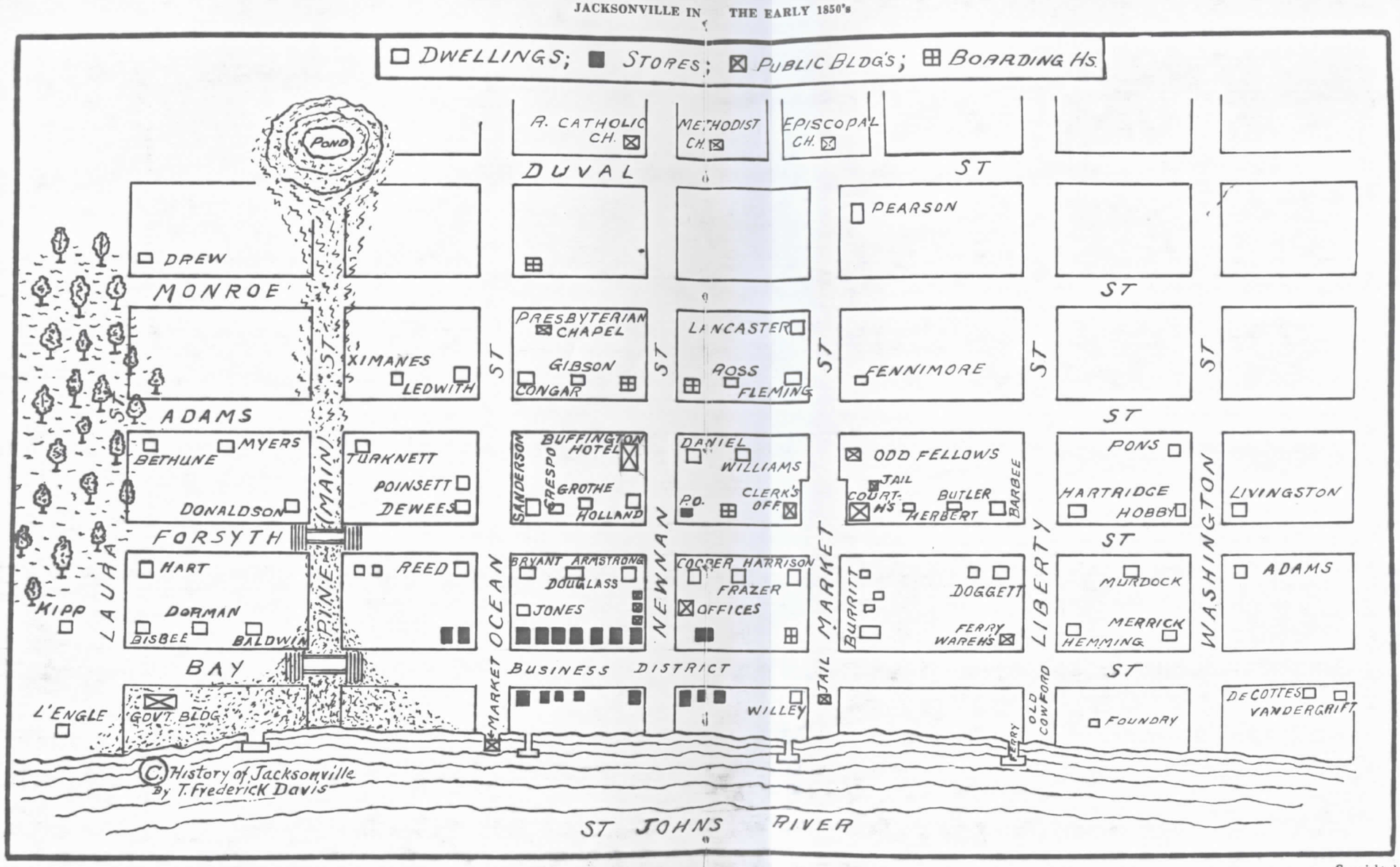
All the buildings at that time were crudely built, and most were one-story wooden structures. The stores were



Pictorial Map
based upon:

1. Map of Jacksonville, Florida drawn by N.R Child about 1847 and preserved by Dr. A.S. Baldwin.
2. Material contained in History of Early Jacksonville, Florida, 1911, and History of Jacksonville, Florida and Vicinity, 1925, T. Frederick Davis, with verbal information and advice from the author.
3. Material contained in A History Of Medicine in Jacksonville and Duval County, Florida, Webster Merritt, M.D.

Figure 2



Between Duval and Church Streets near Pine (now Main) was a pond where the sportsmen of Jacksonville used to shoot ducks. The drainage was down Pine Street to the river, and south of Adams Street was a quagmire. Wooden bridges were built across Pine Street at Forsyth and at Bay.

The business district was Bay Street between Newnan and Ocean. It was a pastime to stand in the rear doors of the stores on the south side of Bay Street and practice marksmanship with rifle and pistol upon the alligators that came out to sun themselves on the banks of the St. Johns.

Figure 3

not heated; in cool weather, fires were built in the sandy streets. There were probably no wheeled vehicles in the forties.[1]

Evidently, the people of Jacksonville, while living moderately, were comfortable and had reason to be content during these years. Obadiah Congar, a retired sea captain who spent his last years as a resident of Jacksonville, wrote to his sister in New Jersey in 1842:

> Our social intercourse with our neighbors is mostly of a friendly character, and perhaps there is no place of the same size in our land where there is less poverty or absolute want than in Jacksonville.[2]

In another letter dated November 25, 1847, he wrote, perhaps to assure his sister of his comfort in such a faraway place:

> We have a convenient dwelling 180 yards from River St. Johns with the beef and fish market in full view from our house. The market bell is always rung to notify when either of the above articles are for sale. Our market has generally been well supplied with both these necessaries at very cheap prices. We get the best cut of the hind quarter, whether for steaks or roasting, at 6¼ cents per pound and we can rarely consume 6¼ cents worth of excellent fish for dinner. We purchase the best kind of wood at $2.50 per cord delivered at our yard. Vegetables, the growth of the country, are scarce except sweet potatoes, now 37½ cents per bushel.[3]

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[1] O. L. Keene, "The Old and New Jacksonville Furnishes an Interesting Story," Metropolis (Jacksonville), December 12, 1908. Cited hereafter as Keene.

[2] Obadiah Congar, The Autobiography and Memorials of Captain Obadiah Congar, ed. Rev. Henry T. Cheever (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1851), p. 6. Cited hereafter as Congar.

[3] Ibid., p. 9.

In 1850 Dr. A. S. Baldwin, one of Jacksonville's leading citizens, supervised the planting of live oak trees along the streets in town. In time, these grew to be "noble trees, with branches and foliage reaching from sidewalk to centre of street, there meeting to give a grateful shade and arbor-like appearance in many places for long distances."[4] Jacksonville was sometimes referred to as the "Forest City" because of the beauty of these trees. Eventually they were all destroyed by fire, the last of them in the great fire of 1901 that leveled most of the city.

The growth of Jacksonville during this period before the war was largely because of the development of an extensive lumber industry. Northeast Florida abounded in timberland, principally long leaf yellow pine and live oak. The first steam saw mill in the area was built at Panama on Trout Creek (north of Jacksonville) in 1828 or 1829. This helped to increase the local building in the Jacksonville area considerably at the time, but the true worth of the lumber business for Jacksonville was yet to come. The increase in river transportation and the building of more sawmills made Jacksonville a leading center of lumber trade. By 1853 three hundred ships were required to handle the yearly export.[5] The first circular

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[4]James Esgate, Jacksonville, The Metropolis of Florida (Boston: William G. J. Perry, 1885), p. 17.

[5]Junius E. Dovell, Florida: Historic, Dramatic, Contemporary (4 vols.; New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1952), I, 377. Cited hereafter as Dovell.

sawmill was erected near Jacksonville on Pottsburg Creek in 1850. The next year John Clark built one on East Bay Street near Hogan's Creek and then added a planing mill. By 1854 there were about five or six sawmills in Jacksonville and about eight others in the immediate vicinity. Most of these were in various locations up and down the river.

The sawmills were built and owned mainly by Northern businessmen who in their travels or business dealings had realized the potential of the industry in this area. Although they did not all live right in town, Jacksonville benefited greatly from these well-to-do neighbors who put much money into circulation.

Charles Lanman, who traveled up the St. Johns River by steamer in 1853, lamented the destruction of the beautiful river banks. He observed:

> Those engaged in the lumbering business here are chiefly northerners, and they of course are thinking more of dollars than of nature and the picturesque. Within the last three years, they have built some twenty steam mills at as many eligible points on the river, costing from $6,000 to $12,000 each; and their lumber finds a ready market not only in the Northern states, but in the West Indies.[6]

The tourist industry was another important factor in the development of Jacksonville during these years before the war. Increase in steamer transportation from Savannah and Charleston during the forties helped greatly in this

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[6]Charles Lanman, Adventures in the Wilds of the United States (Philadelphia: John W. Moore, 1856), II, 109.

area. The Jacksonville News carried the following information in 1847:

> Strangers from the North who visited us last winter have avowed their intention to return and make this place their permanent residence. . . . The rapid settlement of Florida has produced a corresponding effect in increasing the business of Jacksonville.[7]

Lodging for the tourists and invalids who traveled to Jacksonville, particularly in the winter, became quite a problem. Many homes were turned into boarding houses, but still there were seldom enough beds and rooms to go around. One report stated that during the winter of 1849-1850, nearly two hundred tourists could find no accommodations.[8]

Around that time a gentleman named Oliver Wood built a hotel at the southwest corner of Adams and Newnan Streets and called it Wood's Hotel. This was Jacksonville's first real hotel. Mr. Wood sold it in 1851 to Mr. Samuel Buffington, who added about twenty rooms so that he could accommodate over one hundred fifty people.[9]

The mildness of the winters invited both invalids and travelers, some of whom found Jacksonville to their liking and remained. Others, through their written or verbal accounts, advertised Florida throughout the North. Their

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[7]Newspaper quotation from Dovell, p. 420.

[8]Webster Merritt, A Century of Medicine in Jacksonville and Duval County (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1949), p. 25. Cited hereafter as Merritt.

[9]Florida Republican (Jacksonville), September 4, 1851.

impressions of Jacksonville were varied. Nevertheless, interest was being aroused in this area, and more and more people were finding their way South to see for themselves. Clement Claiborne Clay of Alabama, who was later both United States Senator and Confederate States Senator, was in Jacksonville for his health in 1851 and may have been staying in Buffington House when he wrote his father:

> This place and particularly this hotel is filled with invalids--a spectral assemblage of bronchial and consumptive patients, some of whom will be buried here very soon. I met in this hotel, Mrs. Downing. . . and many yankees from all parts of the North.[10]

Most visitors observed that the city was well located. The most frequent complaint was about the sandy streets. According to one visitor, Jacksonville in 1851 was

> an increasing city, its situation being favorable for trade; but it lies amid sand, and was a horribly hot, disagreeable place. We slept there one night, at a hotel which resembled a noisy wooden barrack.[11]

In order to accommodate the visitors and handle the movement of lumber and other products, transportation to and from Jacksonville expanded greatly during the forties and fifties.

Steamboats had begun to travel the St. Johns as early as 1830, and troops and supplies were carried up and down the river during the Seminole War. In the forties,

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[10]Dovell, p. 383.

[11]Fredrika Bremer, Homes of the New World (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853), p. 484.

however, Jacksonville was served each week by two regular steamers--one to and from Savannah, and the other up the river as far as Enterprise. These early steamers were small and used fat pine wood for fuel. They followed the protected inland water route to Savannah. During the fifties steamer service increased considerably between Jacksonville, Savannah and Charleston. Sailing vessels traveled out of Jacksonville as far as the West Indies. Larger steamboats and tugboats were built in the latter half of the decade.

On January 20, 1851, legislation authorized the building of a plank toll road from Jacksonville westward to Alligator (Lake City). Work did begin on this road, and six miles of it was completed; but the project was abandoned when the company building it realized a railroad would be an actuality.[12]

As far back as 1835, Jacksonville men had been making plans for a railroad to the West Coast of the state, but the Indian War intervened. Actual work continued to be delayed until 1857. Jacksonville's first railroad was called the Florida, Atlantic, and Gulf Central Railroad and was completed as far as Lake City on March 13, 1860. A big event was made of the occasion at both ends of the line. The citizens of Jacksonville rode the train to Lake City where they were given

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[12]Bigelow, chap. vi, p. 13.

a barbecue, the favor being returned a week later when the people of Lake City rode to Jacksonville. This was the only railroad into Jacksonville until 1881.

In this period before the war, stagecoach travel was a common means of transportation. Stagecoaches left Jacksonville going west semi-weekly right after the arrival of steamers from Savannah and returned in time to connect with them on return trips. All the Jacksonville newspapers of the forties and fifties contained at least two or three advertisements of both stagecoaches and steamers, with their arriving and departing times and the possibilities for connections.[13]

Land transportation within the city was mostly by horseback or on foot. The only wheeled vehicle in town in 1852 was a mule-drawn hearse and dray operated by Sam Reed, a colored man.[14] Rowboats were used for pleasure trips on the rivers and streams.

It appears that education received little attention in these first decades of Jacksonville's existence. This matter was left up to the individual families. The larger plantation owners of the vicinity usually employed tutors or governesses for their children. Many families who could not afford to pay a teacher taught their children what they

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[13] Florida News (Jacksonville), July 3, 1852.

[14] Keene.

could at home. Around 1835 Alexander Graham operated a "Male and Female" school. Reading and writing, and arithmetic were offered at $4.00 per quarter; grammar, geography, and composition, at $5.00 per quarter; and French language, at $1.00 per quarter.[15] There are records of classes being held in the first floor of the Odd Fellows Lodge around 1845. The Presbyterian Chapel at Ocean and Monroe Streets and a warehouse at Bay and Liberty Streets were used for classrooms also around this time. The Civil War interrupted for some time the little progress that was being made educationally in Jacksonville.[16]

In endeavoring to imagine what life was like in another period, it is often helpful to realize what must be omitted from the picture. During the 1840's and 1850's, there were no kerosene lamps, no electric lights, no ice-making machines, and no telephones in general use in the United States. What was life like without these and the other conveniences which seem commonplace to us today?

Certainly more time was spent then in providing the necessities of life, but the people of Jacksonville were generally in moderate or better circumstances, and they accomplished their routine chores in a relaxed and friendly manner. Even the shopkeepers would gather for a game of

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[15] Jacksonville Courier, January 1, 1835.

[16] T. F. Davis, pp. 415-416.

cards when business was slow. The general tone of the town was one of culture, refinement, and hospitality. No doubt this was a result of the presence of a large percentage of wealthy families, whose adult members were rather well educated and accustomed to a life of this sort.[17]

Families usually spent their free time attending dinner parties, playing cards, or dancing. Everyone took part in the dancing, including children and servants. There were square dances, reels, Spanish dances, and waltzes. The mild climate made outdoor activities popular during most of the year. These included picnics, oyster roasts, camping on the river bank, and rowing on moonlit nights, along with much singing and serenading. In addition, the people were enthusiastic about their town, and made the most of every opportunity for a public gathering or celebration.[18]

Jacksonville's earlier settlers seem to have left their influence on the spirit of the city. Her people were as fun-loving and gay as the Spanish, as frugal and proper as the English, and as proud, patriotic and civic-minded as the American frontiersmen. It might be added that there were enough Northerners among the population to account for a general talent for business that has always distinguished the city.

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[17] Ibid., pp. 112-114.

[18] Ibid.

A liking for strong drink characterized many of Jacksonville's citizens, not surprising in a shipping center. The one bar was located on Bay Street in the center of the business district, and it was frequented by "young men from the best families"[19] as well as sailors from the schooners loading lumber. This element in the town was very distressing to Captain Congar, who was an extremely religious man. Despite his advanced years, he exerted a strong influence in opposition to intemperance, profanity, gambling and similar vices. In one of his letters to his sister in Newark, he wrote that "profaness, [sic] Sabbath-breaking, and intemperance abounded to an alarming degree when we first came here and although we can hardly say the people of Jacksonville are a church-going people, yet numbers of them do attend, let who will preach."[20]

Although the citizens of Jacksonville thoroughly enjoyed their good times, they were sympathetic and thoughtful during sorrow, illness, or tragedy. Unfortunately, there were many times of affliction. The list of disasters that Jacksonville endured from 1850 through 1857 makes it difficult to understand how she made the progress she did during that decade.

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[19]T. Frederick Davis, History of Early Jacksonville, Florida (Jacksonville: The H. & W. B. Drew Company., 1911), p. 154.

[20]Congar, p. 7.

Jacksonville's first epidemic began early in the summer of 1850 and lasted until late September. It was called by various names--bone, broken-bone, and bilious fever. The disease was characterized "by high fever accompanied by severe aching pains in the limbs and joints."[21] The epidemic caused no deaths, but was very extensive and the business and industry of the town suffered.

During the summer and fall months of the early 1850's, Jacksonville was hit by another kind of fever, which, judging from its symptoms, must have been malaria.[22] The illness was intermittent and more prevalent among persons living along the river. The newspapers of the time were silent about the increasing illness in Jacksonville which probably represents an effort to protect the town's reputattion and business. However, the citizens were alarmed at the frequency of illness in their town. In 1852, a physician, Dr. Holland, was elected mayor. He and his council passed a law to prevent the importation of contagious or infectious disease into the city of Jacksonville by boat. Any captain, mate, or pilot who brought an infected or contagious person into Jacksonville was to be imprisoned or fined.

Nevertheless, in that same year, a Jacksonville lawyer became ill with smallpox soon after his return from a business

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[21] Merritt, p. 26.

[22] Ibid.

trip in Georgia. The disease quickly spread among the prominent citizens and eventually throughout the town. Vaccine was brought into the town, and although the epidemic had been moderately severe, it was brought under control.[23]

The year 1854 brought fire, sickness, and sorrow to Jacksonville. A scarlet fever epidemic got under way in March, and soon after it had begun to spread, smallpox developed. On April 5, a huge fire broke out in a hay shed on the wharf. It quickly spread and raged for four hours, completely destroying all the business district and many houses. The shaded area in Figure 4 indicates the area destroyed by this fire. The total loss was over $300,000.[24] Characteristically, Jacksonville citizens made the most of a bad situation. When they rebuilt their stores and homes, they made them larger and better than before, and many were of brick.

Since the two printing offices were destroyed in the fire, there was no regular newspaper issued until June 15. In that issue, the editor quoted from the physicians' report concerning the epidemics. Twelve had died from scarlet fever and fifteen from smallpox. One family lost five grown sons within eight days.[25]

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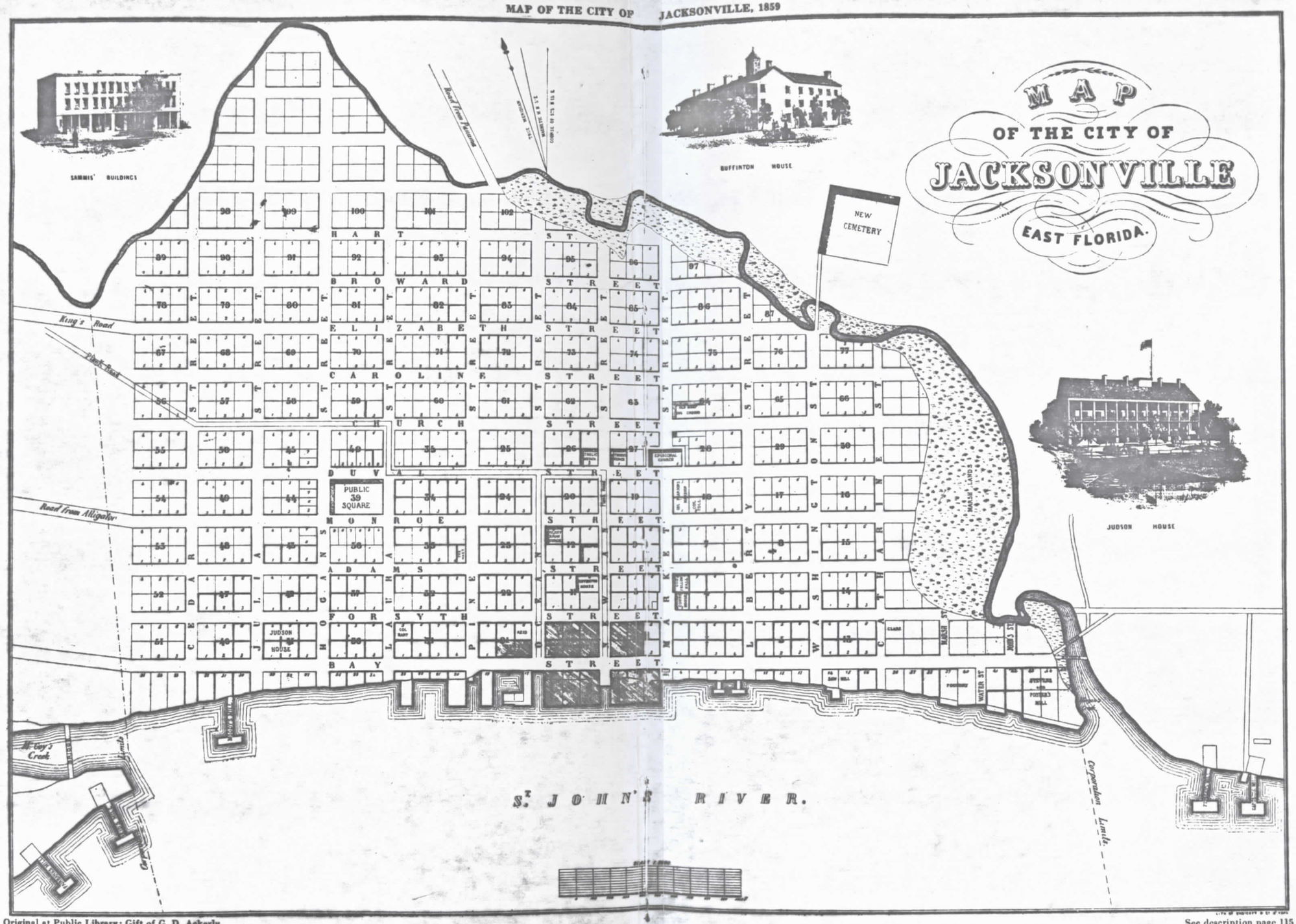
[23]Ibid., p. 27.

[24]Florida Republican. Extra (Jacksonville), April 6, 1854.

[25]Merritt, p. 33.

MAP OF THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE, 1859


MAP
OF THE CITY OF
JACKSONVILLE
EAST FLORIDA.
SAMMIS' BUILDINGS
BUFFINTON HOUSE
JUDSON HOUSE
NEW CEMETERY
King's Road
Plank Road
Road From Alligator
Road From Tallahassee
PUBLIC SQUARE
JUDSON HOUSE
HART STREET
BROWARD STREET
ELIZABETH STREET
CAROLINE STREET
CHURCH STREET
DUVAL STREET
MONROE STREET
ADAMS STREET
FORSYTH STREET
BAY STREET
PINE STREET
LAURA STREET
NEWNAN STREET
JULIA STREET
CEDAR STREET
MARKET STREET
BEECH STREET
ASH STREET
MAGNOLIA STREET
MAIN STREET
WATER ST
CLARK
MARSH ST
MOSS ST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
METHODIST CHURCH
COL. BARRY
COL. HELL
COL. CROOM
COL. MCCLURE
COL. MCCLURE
COL. MCCLURE

When news reached Jacksonville later that summer that yellow fever had broken out in Savannah, Jacksonville citizens refused to let Savannah steamers dock or even pass by the city. When the captain of the mail steamer did not take the quarantine seriously, a group of Jacksonville men shot at the vessel twice with an old cannon, hitting the vessel both times. The result was that the mail steamer did not travel the St. Johns until the Savannah epidemic was ended.

Except for another fire in 1856 that destroyed the entire business block on Bay Street between Pine (Main) and Laura Streets, Jacksonville was relatively free from tragedy until 1857. In the spring of that year, yellow fever broke out on the west side of town near the intersection of Bay and Broad Streets. The pond in that area had been partially drained to make way for the railroad to the west, and it was generally believed that the disease originated from the low, marsh land and the stagnant stream nearby. Whatever the cause, the disease reached epidemic proportions quickly and spread throughout the town. Business stopped completely, and most of the residents evacuated. Only a drug store remained open so that medicine could be supplied. Except for doctors, ministers, and others tending the sick, the town was deserted. Grass grew in the streets, and no steamers would dock. Finally, a freeze on November 20 brought the epidemic to an end. Out of six hundred persons in Jacksonville

who had the disease, one hundred twenty-seven died.[26]

In spite of these many setbacks, Jacksonville grew and made progress. The census of 1860 showed a population of 2,018.[27] During that year business continued active, but the attention of the public in Jacksonville, as elsewhere in the United States, gradually turned toward political rather than business matters. News of the attack on Fort Sumter suspended business with the North. The mills closed, the mails ceased and once again, the curtain closed on an era of progress and development in Jacksonville.

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[26]T. F. Davis, p. 106.

[27]Ibid., p. 500.

Chapter III

JACKSONVILLE DURING THE CIVIL WAR

The secession of Florida from the Union on January 10, 1861, was accompanied in the capital by applause, shouting and jubilant celebration that lasted far into the night. Talk of secession had been going on in the state for more than a year and the Democratic party, led by the influential planting counties of Central Florida, had been hard at work convincing the people that this was the only course to take should a party hostile to the South and slavery win the November elections. Floridians perhaps felt less reluctance to leave the Union than the other Southern states since Florida had been a state for only fifteen years.

Regardless of her apparent optimism, Florida, of all the Southern states, was the one least able to fight the war that followed. With only about 140,000 people, nearly one-half of whom were Negro slaves, she had little manpower to

offer. She was still operating on a frontier economy. Cotton, the most important export, was of little value to the Confederacy except as a medium of trade. Only beef and the salt used in its preservation were produced in sufficient quantity to provide meat for the fighting men of the South. A lack of transportation was a handicap also. Florida's railroad system had been just getting underway, and none of the lines connected with any other state. In addition, her long, indented coastline made defense of the state practically impossible.[1]

The vote was sixty-two to seven for secession. Jacksonville, in the months and years that followed, was accused of having much Union sentiment; however, the record shows that the vote of her delegation was with the majority.[2] The idea of secession had not been immediately accepted by all the citizens of Jacksonville. Much discussion and argument had gone on, but by the end of 1860 whatever Union sentiment remained was kept carefully hidden. The large number of Northern businessmen who had settled recently in the city and had invested heavily there, particularly in the lumber industry, elected to remain in Jacksonville and protect

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[1]Charleton W. Tebeau and Ruby Leach Carson, Florida from Indian Trail to Space Age (Delray Beach, Florida: The Southern Publishing Company, 1965), I, 187. Cited hereafter as Tebeau and Carson.

[2]William Watson Davis, The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida (New York: Columbia University, 1913), p. 64. Cited hereafter as W. W. Davis.

their investments, probably hoping they could stay quietly out of politics.[3]

During the entire war, Florida was never adequately defended, as the Confederacy needed her men to fight the more strategic battles farther north. Jacksonville, the gateway to Florida, suffered more than any other city from this handicap.[4] The city was occupied four times by the enemy and burned on different occasions by both Federals and Confederates.

The Jacksonville Light Infantry, a local military organization formed in 1859, offered its services to the state of Florida soon after secession, and was the first such company to be accepted. Governor John Milton ordered this group to defend the mouth of the St. Johns. Their captain was Dr. Holmes Steele, and the fort they erected near Mayport Mills was named Fort Steele. In February, 1861, four thirty-two pound guns were secured from Fort Marion at St. Augustine and hauled to Fort Steele.[5] In the May 7, 1861, issue of the St. Johns Mirror, under the title "One More Appeal," Captain Steele asked citizens to contribute their slave labor "for work on the Fort at the mouth of our river." His pleas were reinforced by the editor who added that

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[3]Bigelow, chap. vii, p. 1.

[4]Tebeau and Carson, p. 181.

[5]T. F. Davis, p. 459.

contributing the slaves was "a patriotic duty for everyone interested in the strengthening and securement of the Fort, which is occupied and to be defended by their fellow-citizens."[6]

Other military companies were formed in Jacksonville for the Confederacy. When the Second Florida Infantry was mustered into Confederate service near the Old Brick Church in West Jacksonville, one of the ten companies comprising the regiment was the St. John's Grays, organized and commanded by J. J. Daniel and made up of many Jacksonville and Duval County men. On July 15, 1861, these men left by railroad for Richmond, Virginia. Two days later a Jacksonville newspaper contained an emotional appeal from Commander Daniel asking the people of Duval and Clay Counties to support the families of absent soldiers by giving money and aid.[7]

Around April, 1861, a group called the Duval County Cow Boys was formed and occupied St. Johns Bluff. When the Third Florida Infantry was mustered into Confederate service near Jacksonville on August 10, 1861, among the ten companies were the Jacksonville Light Infantry and the Duval County Cow Boys. These two companies, as part of the Third Florida Infantry, continued to be stationed at Mayport and St. Johns Bluff. Figure 5 will be helpful in locating Mayport, St. Johns Bluff, and other places mentioned in this chapter.

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[6]St. Johns Mirror (Jacksonville), May 7, 1861.

[7]St. Johns Mirror Extra (Jacksonville), July 17, 1861.

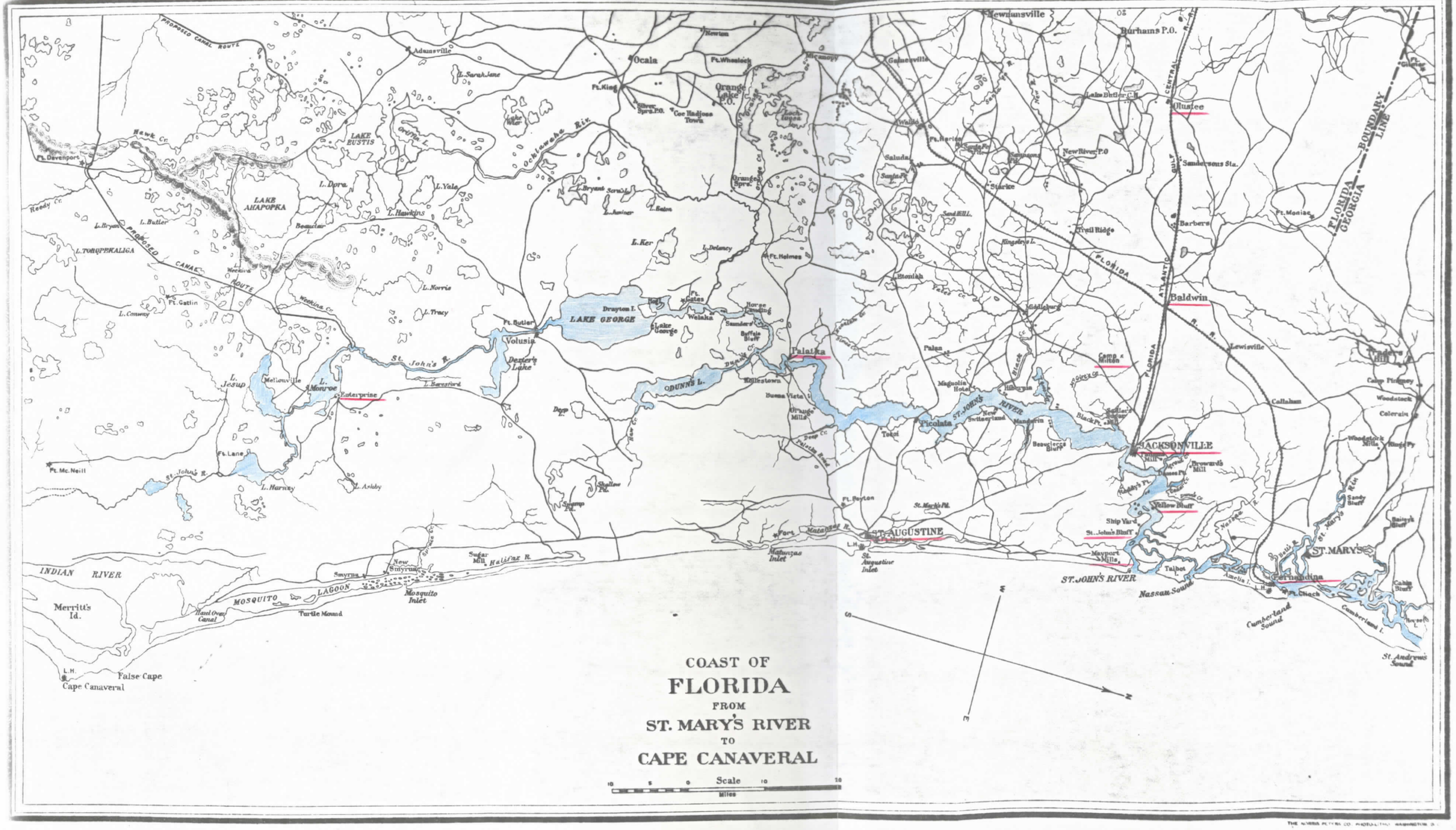

Figure 5

From Official Records, Navy, 1 ser., XII, 620.

Thus Jacksonville made her initial contribution of manpower to the war in the South, but still she was not adequately prepared to defend herself at home. Neither was the rest of Florida. Originally the intention of the Confederate government had been to defend the Florida seaboard. Troops and supplies were to be concentrated at or near the key towns of Apalachicola, Fernandina, Jacksonville, and Pensacola. The almost constant demand for more men and supplies elsewhere in the Confederacy, however, prevented any of these places from ever building up an adequate defense.[8]

The military importance of Jacksonville lay in her strategic location on the river. Unless an invasion could be stopped on the river at Jacksonville, the interior of the state was threatened. Nevertheless, the river was so inadequately defended that when rumors of a Federal expedition on its way to Jacksonville were spreading early in March, 1862, the Confederate commander informed Mayor Hoeg that no attempt would be made to defend the river or the city of Jacksonville because of the superiority of the Union forces.[9] The troops stationed at Mayport and St. Johns Bluff were ordered back to Jacksonville. Eventually, these men went on with the rest of the Third Florida Infantry to fight for

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[8]W. W. Davis, pp. 144-145.

[9]Bigelow, chap. vii, p. 4.

the Confederacy in other places.

On March 7, 1862, Mayor H. H. Hoeg published a proclamation the purpose of which was to calm the people:

TO THE CITIZENS OF JACKSONVILLE

Fellow Citizens:

In the present trying crisis, much thought and anxious inquiry have been devoted by the City Council, the citizens, and several of our friends from the country, including Gen. S. R. Pyles and Staff, to ascertain and determine what, under all the circumstances, is best to be done, and will best promote the safety, comfort, and happiness of the people.

On yesterday evening, a portion of the City Council held an interview with Gen. Pyles and his Staff, and after full discussion and patient deliberation, it was unanimously determined that inasmuch as all the Confederate troops, arms, and munitions of war upon the St. Johns river and in East and South Florida generally are to be abandoned, it is useless to attempt a defense of the City of Jacksonville, and therefore upon the approach of the enemy it should be surrendered. This having been decided upon as the sound and proper course to be pursued, Col. M. Whit. Smith suggested that the Mayor should make it known to the citizens by proclamation and this suggestion being fully concurred in by all present,

I therefore, in conformity thereto, make known to you that all defenses will be immediately withdrawn from the city and the St. Johns river and no military force will be kept on duty, except for Police purposes, and such force will be supplied by details drawn from our citizens.

I advise and earnestly admonish our citizens to remain at their homes and pursue their usual avocations, and I call upon all good citizens to give their aid and counsel for the preservation of good order throughout the entire community. It is the opinion of our most experienced and intelligent citizens (and I think a correct one) that if the enemy meet with no resistance, private property will be respected, and unarmed citizens will be allowed to pursue their usual occupations. I trust, therefore, that our whole population will act with becoming prudence, and that no unnecessary provocation may be given that may furnish a reason for violence from any quarter; and if after we have offered no resistance and given no just

> provocation, violence should be committed, the whole blame will rest on the aggressors. Every citizen able to perform police duty is hereby required to hold himself in readiness to go on duty, upon receiving notice from the Chief of Police.
>
> H. H. Hoeg, Mayor[10]

The result of Mayor Hoeg's proclamation was the opposite of what he had intended. Instead of being reassured that peace would prevail, the people panicked. All who could fled the city. The train to Lake City was jammed with refugees to the interior. Shops closed. Business was suspended. Official records of the city were hastily buried for safe-keeping, and, unfortunately, were illegible when dug up after the war.

The next day, March 8, a federal squadron of four gunboats, two armed launches, and a transport left from Fernandina, which was already occupied. The citizens of Jacksonville who remained awaited the attack. By the eleventh, the Federals had not yet crossed the bar into the St. Johns. In order to prevent supplies of military value from falling into enemy hands, Confederate troops, acting on orders of General Trapier, Confederate Commander of the District, burned all of the lumber mills in the area except one, which flew the English flag. A foundry and a gunboat were also burned. The Confederate soldiers, in their

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[10]U. S., Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies, 1 ser., XII (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 600-601. Cited hereafter as Official Records, Navy.

enthusiasm, evidently went beyond General Trapier's orders as it was reported they killed at least three "Yankee" residents, two of whom were attempting to escape in boats. Also during the night of the eleventh, some refugees from Fernandina and Jacksonville burned Judson House (a hotel) and two or three other buildings. By that time, the nearest Confederate troops were stationed at Baldwin under Colonel W. S. Dilworth with orders to resist if the Federals should try to go farther into Florida.

The next day, March 12, 1862, the four Federal gunboats containing the Fourth New Hampshire Regiment under Colonel T. J. Whipple landed at Jacksonville and occupied the city. Meeting no resistance from the nearly-deserted city, Federal pickets were stationed and men camped in vacant buildings. The Federals had not considered it necessary to occupy Jacksonville more than a few hours, but representatives from "loyal" residents went immediately to discuss with them the possibility of their remaining permanently. These people were the Union sympathizers who had remained in Jacksonville to protect their investments and who knew their only hope for safety lay in the protection of the Union. Colonel Whipple decided to stay longer.

On March 20, a group of the "Loyal Citizens of the United States of America" met, elected officers, and drafted a resolution denouncing secession and requesting that military forces be maintained in Jacksonville to protect

people and property. This group also recommended that a convention of loyal citizens be held to organize a State Government. In response, Thomas W. Sherman, Federal Commander of the Department of the South, issued a proclamation to the "People of East Florida" in which he promised loyal citizens that they and their property would be protected. In his last paragraph he urged them to continue with their plans to organize politically:

> I earnestly recommend that in every city, town, and precinct you assemble in your primary and sovereign capacity; that you there throw off that sham government which has been forced upon you; swear true fidelity and allegiance to the Constitution of the United States, and organize your government and elect your officers in the good old way of the past. When this is done, then will you see the return of prosperous and happy days, in the enjoyment of that trade and industry to which your extensive coast is so well adapted, and in the immunity from that want and suffering to which you have been so wickedly subjected by the traitorous acts of a few ambitious and unprincipled men; then will you enjoy the fruits of your honest labor, the sweets of happy homes, and the consolation of living under those wise and salutary laws that are due only to an industrious and law-abiding people.[11]

With this assurance, the "Loyal People" called for a Convention for April 10, 1862, of loyal citizens from Duval and other Florida counties to organize a state government under the United States.

On March 24, General H. G. Wright and the 97th Pennsylvania Regiment came to Jacksonville where General

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[11]U. S., Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 1 ser., VI (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), 251. Cited hereafter as Official Records, Army.

Wright assumed command of the Federal troops. The Confederates had begun slowly moving in from Baldwin, and during the night of General Wright's arrival, they attacked two picket stations west of town. General Wright reported one of his men killed, one severely wounded, three captured and two escaped.[12] Three days later, a Federal picket fired upon an advancing party, afterwards discovering that it was a group of escaped Negroes from Lake City. One had been killed and one wounded. Because of the increasing guerilla activity and rumors of a more concentrated attack, General Wright sent for reinforcements from Fernandina which brought the Federal forces in Jacksonville to 1,400 men.

On March 31 General Sherman was relieved of the command of the Department of the South and replaced by Major General David Hunter.[13] In the light of events that followed in Jacksonville, this exchange of command may be significant. On April 3, in correspondence addressed to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, Major General Hunter listed the distribution of the 17,000 troops stationed under his command from St. Augustine to South Carolina and presented his conclusions, part of which follows:

> It is my opinion that this force is entirely too much scattered and is subject to be cut off in detail. I shall order an abandonment of Jacksonville, Fla.,

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[12] Ibid., p. 253.

[13] Ibid., p. 257.

> and the re-enforcement of Forts Marion and Clinch. From later accounts I may add the Union feeling in Florida is not so strong as we were first induced to believe.[14]

In accordance with General Hunter's suggestion, General Wright was ordered to withdraw from Jacksonville. The following notice was presented to the people of Jacksonville on April 7:

> In accordance with orders issued by the general commanding the Department of the South, the troops will be withdrawn from this place, and I am directed by him to notify the people of Jacksonville that it is his intention to have all the aid and protection afforded to the loyal inhabitants of the interior of Florida that is practicable for the security of their persons and property and for the punishment of outrages, and that he holds all persons in that vicinity responsible for the preservation of order and quiet, being fully determined that any outrages upon persons or property contrary to the laws and usages of war shall be visited fourfold upon the inhabitants of disloyal or doubtful character nearest the scene of any such wrongs, when the actual and known perpetrators cannot be discovered. The undersigned trusts that, inasmuch as the unoffending citizens of this place have been treated with the utmost forbearance by our forces, it will not be necessary to carry out the intention expressed in the last clause of the above notice.[15]

Needless to say, the "Loyal Citizens of Jacksonville" were very upset. Their political plans thus aborted, their only concern now was for their safety. To be left in Jacksonville would mean certain death at the hands of the returning Confederates. General Wright promised them aid and protection. Hurriedly, the troops loaded Confederate

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[14] Ibid., p. 263.

[15] Ibid., p. 129.

goods, including some artillery, and prepared to leave. By the next day, the ships were loaded with supplies, troops, and evacuees, but winds and tides kept them from leaving until the next afternoon. They finally arrived in Fernandina on April 10.

In all fifty-four men, women, and children were evacuated with the Federal squadrons. They were taken to Fernandina and Brunswick, Georgia, where they stayed in the vacant buildings and were supplied United States government rations.

Thus ended the first Federal occupation of Jacksonville. The action of the United States authorities was most unexpected, and the Unionists had good reason to feel resentful. They made numerous protests to Congress about this turn of events but never received any satisfaction other than the following report of Secretary of War Stanton to the House of Representatives:

> In answer to the resolution of the House of Representatives, passed on the 24th instant, directing the Secretary of War to communicate to the House all the facts and circumstances within his knowledge in regard to the late evacuation of Jacksonville, Fla., by the troops of the United States, I have the honor respectfully to state that, conceiving it to be the province of the President to direct this Department what facts in relation to military operations shall be communicated, he instructs me to say that Jacksonville was evacuated by the orders of the commanding general of that department for reasons which it is not deemed compatible with the public interest at present to disclose.[16]

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[16] Ibid., p. 131.

The writer of this paper is of the opinion that Jacksonville was abandoned because General Hunter did not share his predecessor's belief that Florida could be brought back into the Union camp by political reorganization originating at Jacksonville. He was not under the personal obligation that General Sherman had been, for the latter had visited Jacksonville briefly and met with the "Loyal Citizens" group. Militarily, there was no reason to hold Jacksonville. To do so may have given the Confederate Army time to rebuild and plan an attack. The importance of the expedition was the holding of the river and that could be accomplished without occupying Jacksonville.

With Fernandina occupied and the river free, Federal boats were stationed at Mayport Mills, a steam sawmill at the site of the present town of Mayport. From here they could patrol the river at will. In the late summer of 1862, however, Confederate batteries were erected at St. Johns Bluff four miles above Mayport and at Yellow Bluff on the opposite side of the river. These batteries kept the Federal gunboats from passing up the river for about three weeks. Finally the Federals sent for help from Hilton Head, South Carolina, and on October 1 four transports with 1,573 men arrived near Mayport Mills.[17]

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[17]John E. Johns, Florida During the Civil War (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1963), p. 74. Cited hereafter as Johns.

The garrison at Yellow Bluff joined Colonel Hopkins and his men at St. Johns Bluff, bringing the Confederate defense there to a total of five hundred. On October 2, the Federals sent land forces around behind the Confederates, preparing to attack the battery from front and rear. However, the Union forces met with no resistance, for Colonel Hopkins and his men had decided they were outnumbered and had abandoned so quietly and cautiously that they were neither seen nor heard by the Federals. All the guns and ammunition that could be removed were taken by the Federals. The next day a Federal gunboat, the Paul Jones, went to Jacksonville attempting to intercept the troops as they crossed the river, but they were too late as the fleeing troops were already aboard the train to Baldwin.[18]

There was much criticism of Colonel Hopkins' retreat. Even General Joseph Finegan, Confederate Commander of East and Middle Florida, referred to it as a "gross military blunder, that may require investigation."[19] Hopkins demanded a court of inquiry be held to investigate the matter. This was granted, and he was found "wholly justified" in ordering the retreat.[20]

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[18] Official Records, Army, 1 ser., XIV, 127, 136, 387.

[19] Ibid., p. 138.

[20] Ibid., pp. 142-43.

Jacksonville was quietly occupied for the second time on October 5, 1862. Troops were landed and remained for three days while gunboats went up the river to search for enemy boats that might be hidden in the creeks. The city, almost deserted, is best described in a letter written by a Union officer, Valentine Chamberlain, to his family:

> If you could see Jacksonville you could thoroughly realize what secession had [sic] done for the south. Desolation and distress are before you. Before reaching the city you see the ruins of a large number of steam saw mills, they were burned before our people reached there last season. . . . Grass and weeds grow rank and tall in the principal streets. Houses with blinds closed attest the absence of inmates. Stores with shelves but no goods. Churches deserted and gloomy. Depot, but no cars. Such is the general look of the city. There are a few places where the people stay, through secesh and union rule. Some of them look very well. About the streets you see darkies, a few women, a very few men. The men, you are told, are away up the country, but you know they are in the rebel army. Provisions are very scarce and consequently dear. . . . The women folk complained bitterly of the rebel soldiers for leaving the Bluff and coming into the town to fight.[21]

In looking over the town, Captain Chamberlain discovered the printing office of the Southern Rights newspaper deserted with the form for the October 4, 1862, issue ready for printing. Before following orders to destroy the press, he and some of his men reset some of the type, and after inserting their own comments, printed the newspaper. These papers were distributed to friends and relatives in

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[21]"A Letter of Captain Valentine Chamberlain, Seventh Connecticut Volunteers, Upon His Return to Hilton Head from the St. Johns River Expedition--October 10, 1862," Florida Historical Quarterly, XV, 93.

the North. Portions of the inserted material follow:

> The friends of Colonel Hopkins informed that the Colonel declines to run as candidate for the office of Senator, notwithstanding the good time he made running from St. John's Bluff. . . . The Editor of this paper is absent from town for a few days on urgent business in the interior. It is therefore announced that the Publication of this Paper will hereafter be weekly suspended as it has been heretofore, weakly continued. . . . The taking of our battery after a loss of courage, but no blood, and the presence of the Yankee Fleet, and the fearful proximity of Gen. Brannan and his forces, render the Southern Rights precarious.[22]

On October 9 Jacksonville was again evacuated. General Brannan, commander of the Federal expedition, later reported that he took with him "several refugees and about 276 contrabands, including men, women, and children."[23]

The third time Jacksonville was occupied by Federal troops was on March 10, 1863. They came primarily to recruit Negro troops but also hoped to gain a foothold in the interior, and to establish a "loyal" base for ultimately bringing Florida back into the Union.[24] The invading force consisted of two regiments of Negro troops commanded by white officers. Occupation of the city was accomplished easily. Colonel T. W. Higginson, commander of the expedition, wrote of it:

> There were children playing on the wharves; careless men, here and there, lounging down to look at us, hands in pockets; a few women came to their doors

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[22]Southern Rights (Jacksonville), October 4, 1862.

[23]Official Records, Army, 1 ser., XIV, 131.

[24]Ibid., p. 423.

> and gazed listlessly upon us, shading their eyes with their hands.[25]

According to Higginson, there were in Jacksonville at this time about five hundred citizens.[26]

The Federals immediately erected a fort on each side of the railroad where it entered the city. The gunboats aimed heavy guns of long range toward the city and the surrounding country. The Confederate troops, stationed about three miles west of Jacksonville, followed the same guerilla type of warfare as they had during the first occupation, with frequent skirmishes and attacks on small parties of Federals.[27]

On March 17 the Confederates sent word to Colonel Higginson that the women and children would have to be evacuated from the city within twenty-four hours or they would not be responsible for their safety. This was accomplished under a flag of truce after which most of the evacuees were taken to Lake City. A few days later two white regiments were sent to reinforce the two Negro regiments. Jacksonville, practically deserted now except for the Union troops, did not receive the expected attack; however, the skirmishing increased on the outskirts of town. The Confederates mounted

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[25]Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Up the St. Johns River," Atlantic Monthly, XVI (September, 1865), 314. Cited hereafter as Higginson.

[26]Ibid., p. 315.

[27]Official Records, Army, 1 ser., XIV, 837.

a cannon on a flatcar, hooked it to a locomotive and sent it down to within range of Jacksonville. This proved to be an effective method of harassment, and a few lives were lost until the Federals managed under fire to tear up some of the track.[28]

Hopes for recruiting Negroes in great numbers were not fulfilled, and the Union sentiment necessary to establish the planned "loyal" base for returning Florida to the Union did not materialize.[29] Therefore, on March 29, 1863, the Federal troops were again withdrawn from Jacksonville in order to help in the more important operations against Savannah and Charleston. Just before the evacuation, however, some of the soldiers suddenly set fire to some buildings, plundered and looted private homes, stores, and churches. Confederate soldiers, led by General Finegan, entered the town as the gunboats disappeared and extinguished the fire. Some six blocks and about twenty-five buildings had been destroyed.[30]

The presence of Negro troops in Jacksonville evidently caused different reactions among the townspeople. After the war, Colonel Higginson wrote:

> To some of these whites it was the last crowning humiliation, and they were, or professed to be, in

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[28]T. F. Davis, p. 129.

[29]W. W. Davis, p. 173.

[30]T. F. Davis, pp. 130-32.

> perpetual fear. On the other hand, the most intelligent and lady-like woman I saw, the wife of a Rebel captain, rather surprised me by saying that it seemed pleasanter to have these men stationed there, whom they had known all their lives, and who had generally borne a good character, than to be in the power of entire strangers.[31]

Federal forces did not return to Jacksonville for almost a year. The fourth occupation of the city began in February, 1864, and lasted until after the war was over. The reasons for this expedition into Northeastern Florida were stated by General Gillmore in his official report:

> First. To procure an outlet for cotton, lumber, timber, turpentine, and the other products of that State.
> Second. To cut off one of the enemy's sources of commissary supplies. He now draws largely upon the herds of Florida for his beef, and is making preparations to take up a portion of the Fernandina and St. Marks railroad. . . .
> Third. To obtain recruits for my colored regiment.
> Fourth. To inaugurate measures for the speedy restoration of Florida to her allegiance, in accordance with instructions which I have received from the President by the hands of Maj. John Hay, assistant adjutant-general.[32]

To these ends, more than twenty vessels containing seven thousand troops arrived in Jacksonville on February 7 and 8. A Confederate picket of twenty men stationed in the town quickly retreated upon arrival of the boats.[33] With no more than twenty-five families in the city, Jacksonville was described by one of the men who landed there as:

> Pathetically dilapidated, a mere skeleton of its former self, a victim of war. Straggling winter

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[31]Higginson, p. 316.

[32]Official Records, Army, 1 ser., 1 part, XXXV, 279.

[33]T. F. Davis, p. 133.

> weeds grow in the streets, and the remains of burned houses give a grotesque, Godforsaken and dreary aspect to the town.[34]

However, Private Milton Woodford in a letter to a friend had a less hopeless impression:

> Jacksonville is quite a place. A good many of the buildings are brick, built in good style and show that they were built by Northern men. A good part of the place has been burned, part by the Rebs and part by our men; but there is enough standing to show what it has been.[35]

The Federals wasted no time in Jacksonville. Most of them marched westward toward Baldwin and Lake City, the march culminating on February 20 in the Battle of Olustee. This battle was the most significant one in Florida during the entire war and resulted in a decisive defeat for the Union side. The Confederate victory resulted in confining the Federal troops to Jacksonville, Fernandina and St. Augustine which had, in fact, been the situation since March, 1862.

Major John Hay had been sent by President Lincoln to Jacksonville with the invading army. When most of the troops traveled west, Hay remained in Jacksonville to register people who were loyal to the United States. It was his hope, along with the President's, to help the "Loyalists" organize political reconstruction in Florida and bring her back into

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[34]"Significant Florida Events for February, 1864," Florida A Hundred Years Ago, ed. Samuel Proctor (Coral Gables, Florida: Florida Civil War Centennial Commission, 1964), p. 1.

[35]Milton M. Woodford, "A Connecticut Yankee Fights at Olustee," ed. Vaughn D. Bonet, Florida Historical Quarterly, XXVII, 255.

the Union. He met with almost no success, and after Olustee, admitted he could not get enough voters.[36]

After the fateful battle, the Federals returned to Jacksonville where the many wounded were cared for in churches and houses. The city was fortified more than ever, and reinforcements brought the army up to twelve thousand men.[37] The Confederate forces also erected elaborate fortifications west of Jacksonville at Camp Milton on McGirts Creek. They numbered about eight thousand men in the vicinity of Jacksonville.[38] On March 30, the Confederates placed twelve torpedoes in the St. Johns River between Palatka and Jacksonville. The United States transports had traveled freely on the river since Palatka, St. Augustine and Jacksonville were in Federal possession, but from April 1 until May 9, three Union vessels were sunk by the torpedoes.[39]

With the strongest forces that either side had built up in Florida at any time during the war, it appeared that decisive action was imminent. But in mid-April there was a change in Federal strategy, and the Union forces began to be steadily withdrawn and sent North.[40] The Southern forces

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[36]Johns, p. 199.

[37]T. F. Davis, p. 134.

[38]Official Records, Army, 1 ser., 1 part, XXXV, 368.

[39]T. F. Davis, p. 135.

[40]Johns, p. 201.

withdrew as well since they, too, were needed in the northern battles. By mid-May only 2,500 to 3,000 Union men, many of them Negroes, were left in Jacksonville. The Confederate forces moved their headquarters to Lake City and did not attempt to match the strength of the Union Army in Jacksonville. A comparatively small number of Confederate cavalry were left at Fort Milton from which they retreated when attacked by a much superior Union force from Jacksonville on the night of May 31, but returned and reoccupied it later. These rebel troops harassed the Union army in Jacksonville by skirmishes with raiding parties on land and torpedoes planted in the water until July 26, 1864, when they finally evacuated.[41]

From then until the final surrender of General Lee, there were no significant events around Jacksonville. The city continued to be the Union headquarters of the district and was not so much a city as an armed camp, as can be seen in Figure 6. The April 14, 1864, issue of The Peninsula, a Jacksonville newspaper, contains a list of orders for military personnel and residents of Jacksonville. A portion of the orders are listed below to give an idea of the restricted life in the city at the time:

> Hdqtrs., District of Florida, Dept., South
> Jacksonville, Fla., Apr. 4, 1864.
> General Orders, No. 20.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> V. All galloping or running horses in the camp, the streets of Jacksonville, or the vicinity of the town, is forbidden, except an emergency shall require it.

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[41]T. F. Davis, pp. 136-137.

Rare photo of occupied Jacksonville showing Bay Street in the vicinity of Ocean during the Civil War. Note the Union sentry on top of the building.

Figure 6

From Richard J. Bowe, Pictorial History of Florida, p. 53.

VI. When a dispatch is sent requiring haste, the person sending it may endorse,--"gallop"-- on the envelope, --without such endorsement the bearer will be liable to arrest and punishment for rapid riding.

. . . . . .

IX. A pass allowing a citizen to trade in town, is not authority to visit any other than Bay Street, and any person holding such pass, found in any other part of the town, or loitering, after finishing the business for which he had ostensibly entered the lines, will be subject to arrest as a spy.

By order of Brigadier-General J. P. Hatch.[42]

All hostilities ceased in Florida in April and May of 1865. As the Confederate troops disbanded, the soldiers from Jacksonville, their families, and other residents who had evacuated, began to trickle back into town. Many of them were on foot because the railroad from Baldwin had been destroyed. Little remained of the city as they had known it. In addition to the ruins of burned buildings, the dilapidated homes, and neglected yards, tree trunks littered the streets where they had been felled to construct a barricade. Of the buildings that remained, the finest were occupied by Federal officers and troops, many of them Negro men. Many Negro refugees from nearby areas had gathered in Jacksonville to be cared for by the United States government. A Confederate officer writing from Madison, Florida, right after the war had this to say:

> Quite a number of persons went down to Jacksonville some days ago to claim their property. . . . It is said that the place is filled up with Yankees--it

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[42]The Peninsula (Jacksonville), April 14, 1864.

> will be a worse Yankee hole than ever. I would not live there again for anything.[43]

Fortunately, the majority of returning Jacksonville residents did not have this attitude. They faced this, their worst disaster, with characteristic courage and determination. The first problem for most of them was to rebuild their homes. With only one lumber mill in operation, prices were high; therefore, cheap shelters had to suffice. During the next two years Jacksonville slowly pulled herself together and entered upon another trying period--reconstruction.

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[43]"Significant Florida Events for May, 1865," Florida A Hundred Years Ago, ed. Samuel Proctor (Coral Gables, Florida: Florida Civil War Centennial Commission, 1965), p. 2.

Chapter IV

RECONSTRUCTION

Apparently, President Johnson sincerely tried to carry out the hopes and plans of his predecessor for an orderly and peaceful restoration of government in the South. Federal troops were maintained in Jacksonville to preserve order and to help in the establishment of a civil government, but they were gradually withdrawn until by August only one battalion remained. These were Negro soldiers commanded by white officers.[1]

In July, 1865, the President appointed Judge William Marvin provisional governor of the state of Florida. His duties were to set up the regulations for an election of delegates to a constitutional convention to meet in the fall for the purpose of drafting a state constitution and electing

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[1]Bigelow, chap. viii, p. 1.

state officers and members of Congress. Evidently Governor Marvin was a wise choice for the position. He was well known in Florida, having been a United States district judge at Kay West, and was a capable, reasonable man.[2]

In order to vote, Floridians either took the oath of allegiance to the United States or were granted special pardons so that they did not need to take it. The oath was not unreasonable and many were able to take it without dishonor.[3] In October the fifty-six delegates met at a constitutional convention in Tallahassee where they adopted a constitution providing for an election, to be held in November, of governor and other state and county officers, members of the legislature, judges, and members of Congress. In addition to annulling secession, accepting emancipation, and repudiating the state debts, the convention deliberated the status of the freedmen. The nature of the ordinances passed indicate the participants felt the Negro, while free, still must be kept within certain limits. This attitude, while frowned upon by Northern radicals, is understandable since most of the members of this body were ex-Confederates.[4]

David S. Walker of Tallahassee was elected the new governor of Florida and the newly elected legislature was

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[2]Hanna, p. 295.

[3]Bigelow, chap. viii, p. 4.

[4]Hanna, p. 296.

made up of ex-slaveholders and veterans. When this body met in December, they took much the same attitude as had the Convention delegates. They ratified the Thirteenth Amendment and granted the Negro certain civil rights but not the right to vote. Many of the laws passed concerned the situation of the Negroes and their new role in society. While recognizing the freedom of the Negro to own land and property, to move about at will, to testify, and to sue, they also included special provisions regarding such matters as crime, sexual morality, indigency, and vagrancy. Often referred to as "the Black Code," these laws were interpreted in various ways:

> To the Radicals they were evidence of a vindictive determination to substitute economic peonage for slavery. Persons of southern bias welcomed them as good and wise codes, representing efforts to promote the welfare of the ex-slave; nonpartisan reaction, which has the habit of hitting closer to the bull's eye of truth, saw them as a realistic acceptance of actual conditions combined with the struggle to bring law and order out of semi-chaos.[5]

The Legislature, meeting a year later in December, 1866, rejected the Fourteenth Amendment, which had already passed the national Congress. Florida had criticized the Civil Rights Bill, and Congress had refused to seat the state's senators, ex-governor Marvin and Wilkinson Call. Even with these difficulties, Florida seemed to be making good progress toward governmental stability.[6] However,

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[5] Ibid., p. 302.

[6] Ibid., p. 303.

this state of affairs was not to last long. In March, 1865, Congress had established the Freedmen's Bureau as a branch of the War Department. Its purpose was to carry on the work that the Army had begun in furnishing provisions, clothing, shelter and fuel to refugees and freedmen. The Bureau was also to locate ex-slaves on abandoned or confiscated land. Originally, the Freedmen's Bureau Act was to last only one year; but as the year drew to a close, radicals and profiteers saw in it a chance to use the Negro politically to force their beliefs on the South. Therefore, in 1866, the act was extended indefinitely by Congressional amendment passed over the President's veto. Since the Bureau was a branch of the War Department, military sub districts with Army officers in charge were established, but each county and principal town also had a civil agent representing the Bureau. This half-military and half-civil organization was not subject to the government of the state, and obviously conflict arose concerning policy and law enforcement. The Bureau, of course, was backed by the Federal Government and therefore its policies took precedence over those of the state.

In addition to these problems, there was no limit to the involvement of the Bureau and it gradually moved into every phase of the Negro's life--social, economic, and finally, political. Among the many functions of the Bureau were the establishment of churches, schools, hospitals, and

banks for the Freedmen. Such extensive involvement by the Federal Government was based on the assumption that without such aid, "the Negro would be victimized by the white."[7] Profiteers took advantage of the opportunity provided by the Freedmen's Bureau to make promises to the Negroes and encourage them to get into politics. Such promises led to the widespread belief among the Negroes in 1866 that by Christmas each Freedman would receive "forty acres and a mule."[8] In 1866 the Freedmen's Savings Bank and Trust Company established two branches in Florida, one in Jacksonville and the other in Tallahassee. The bank in Jacksonville was the larger and opened in March, 1866, in the Hoeg Building at the corner of Bay and Ocean Streets. In 1870 it was moved to a new four-story brick building at the corner of Pine (Main) and Forsyth Streets where it was known as the Freedmen's Bank Building until 1891 when it was destroyed by fire.[9] The purpose of these banks was to help the Negro handle his money, to teach him thrift, and to protect his savings. Evidently, these noble objectives became lost, and in practice they "degenerated into a wildcat scheme to defraud the Negro."[10] The Freedmen's Bank failed in 1874, with 1,608 depositors in

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[7] Ibid., p. 299.

[8] Bigelow, chap. viii, p. 5.

[9] T. F. Davis, p. 141.

[10] Ibid., p. 140.

Jacksonville. The political significance of the bank's failure was the realization by the Negro that he had been used, and gradually he lost interest in politics.[11]

The progress toward a stable government in Florida was disturbed not only by the activities of the Freedmen's Bureau but in another way as well. Not pleased with the way things were going in Florida and several other Southern states, Congress passed the "Reconstruction Act" over the President's veto on March 2, 1867. By this act Florida was placed under military rule and the civil government she had just established was no longer in effect. Before a man could obtain the right to vote, he was required to take a new oath of allegiance stating that he had not participated directly or indirectly in any rebellion against the United States nor given aid or comfort to its enemies. Few Southern men could take this oath, and the result was that the registration of Negroes outnumbered the whites in Florida by more than four thousand.[12] Another election was held to elect delegates to a constitutional convention. Of forty-six delegates, forty-three were Republican, and of these forty-three, eighteen were Negroes.[13] The Convention adopted the Constitution of 1868 and set up the provisions by which the Legislature was elected. This new

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[11] Ibid., p. 141.

[12] Ibid., p. 142.

[13] W. W. Davis, p. 493.

Legislature met in June and ratified the Fourteenth Amendment. On July 4, 1868, the transfer from military control to this civil government took place and Florida was readmitted to the Union. As a result of the Reconstruction Act, the government of Florida from 1868 to 1876 was in the hands of the Freedmen's Bureau and the carpetbaggers.[14]

In spite of all the political upheaval the state and local government went through, business in Jacksonville revived to an amazing degree during the first few years after the war. It began in 1865 and 1866 with a few old steamboats that had survived the war coming out of hiding and again making their way up and down the St. Johns River. With the help of Northern capital, sawmills were rebuilt and local building got under way. Schooners brought goods from the markets and factories of the North and carried back the yellow pine lumber as well as cotton and other products from the interior, including oranges from the new groves that were developing along the St. Johns. Steamship lines from New York made stops at Jacksonville. The tourist industry revived also, bringing northern capitalists into the area again for reasons of health and investment. Work began on repairing the damaged railroad, and it was extended westward to Quincy. In 1866 a telegraph office was established in Jacksonville.[15]

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[14]T. F. Davis, p. 143.

[15]Bigelow, chap. viii, p. 10.

Jacksonville was occupied by the United States forces for four years after the war was over, the last of the troops being withdrawn on April 6, 1869. The presence of these soldiers, along with Federal officials, carpetbaggers, and tourists caused the city's population to swell to an estimated six thousand in 1869.[16] In 1911 Dr. Hy Robinson, who had visited Jacksonville in March, 1868, wrote:

> The city government with a carpet-bagger, Peter Jones, as mayor, was composed of colored men and carpet-baggers. All county and United States officials were carpet-baggers. They were a set of shrewd and active adventurers just imported from the Northern states, mostly New Englanders. We found on our arrival every dwelling house filled with consumptives from the North in search for health. They made trade quite active. . . . The federal soldiery aided the activity of traffic, spending their money lavishly.[17]

While Jacksonville did have her full share of carpetbaggers, many northerners came here for legitimate reasons. One effect of the war was that many soldiers who had been here went home telling about the mild climate and possibilities for future development in the area. In time there began a steady infiltration of winter visitors to Jacksonville, St. Augustine and points along the St. Johns River.[18]

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[16] T. F. Davis, p. 151.

[17] Hy Robinson, "Story of Post-Bellum Jacksonville in a Nutshell," The Sunday Times-Union (Jacksonville), October 26, 1924. Originally appeared in Times-Union in 1911.

[18] T. F. Davis, pp. 147-48.

Again Jacksonville had to face the problem of providing accommodations for the many visitors. Although there were several hotels and boarding houses, none of these were of any great size. In August, 1868, a group of men from Connecticut formed the Jacksonville Hotel Company and built the St. James Hotel on the west side of Laura Street between Duval and Church Streets. Opening for the public on January 1, 1869, this was Jacksonville's first large hotel to be built after the war. It was a modern building, four stories high with one hundred twenty rooms, hot and cold water, bowling alleys, and a billiard room.[19] A photograph of this building, which became a mecca for tourists, can be seen in Figure 7.

There was much building going on in Jacksonville during the period 1868-1870. In addition to the St. James Hotel, a new railroad depot and wharves were erected. As Jacksonville began to spread out, both nice homes and cheaper ones were constructed. By 1870 Jacksonville, unlike the rest of Florida, was in an era of prosperity and growth. The increasing tourist industry required even more hotels. In 1870 the St. Mark's Hotel was built on the Southwest corner of Forsyth and Newman Streets. The brick for this hotel was supposed to have been imported from Europe. It was later called the Hotel Togni. During the period 1870-1875,

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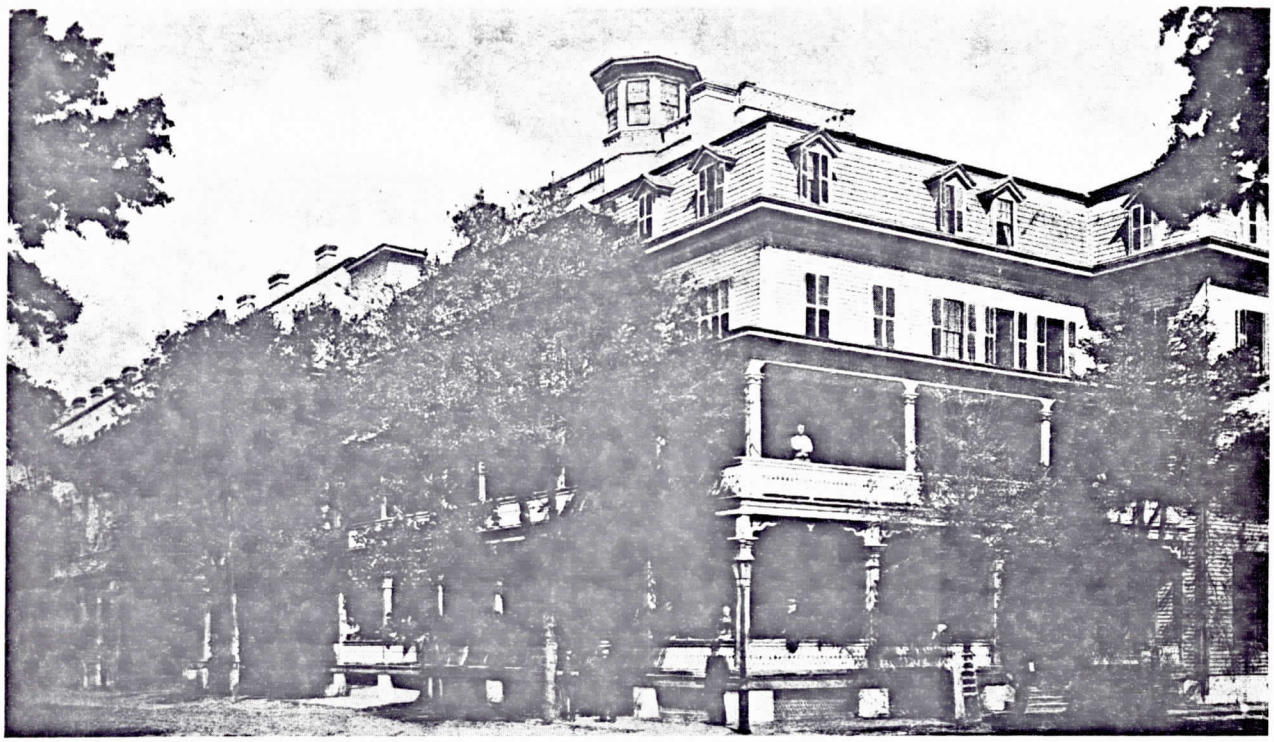
[19] Ibid., pp. 487-88.

ST. JAMES HOTEL
(1869-1901)



Courtesy of Geo. M. Chapin and C. H. Brown

Headquarters for tourists in Florida in the early days, the St. James enjoyed international fame.

Figure 7

From T. F. Davis, p. 487.

at least five more fine hotels were built in Jacksonville.[20] Three banks were established from 1870-1874. The first, a private bank known as Ambler's Bank, was established by M. D. Ambler. The First National Bank of Florida was organized by several prominent men. Located on the northeast corner of Bay and Ocean Streets, it was opened June 27, 1874. On July 6 of that year the Florida Savings Bank was established as a real estate and investment bank.[21]

Education in Jacksonville never had received a great deal of emphasis. During the last years of the war, some moves had been made in the area of education, but these were almost entirely Northern efforts and involved few pupils, nearly all colored as there were few Southern white children in the area at the time. Immediately after the war, most Southern families were too poor to pay for their children's education. As the financial situation improved, the old system of small private schools was resumed. During the years 1868-1876, there was somewhat more progress and attention to education than there had been previously, but it was still limited and mainly intended for the Negro population. The majority of the people did not cooperate in the educational movements because such programs were generally politically

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[20]Bigelow, chap. viii, pp. 12-13.

[21]Ibid., pp. 10-12.

motivated. After the Democrats regained power in 1876, this situation gradually improved.[22]

By 1876 Jacksonville was a growing and thriving city with a population of about seven thousand.[23] The lumber industry was still of primary importance, along with the steady flow of tourists from the North and West. Many goods were imported from New York, and Jacksonville merchants proudly enumerated them in their local newspaper advertisements. There were at that time two weekly, one semi-weekly, and two tri-weekly papers. Indications of the railroad center that Jacksonville would become in the future were already evident. There were two incoming and two outgoing passenger trains daily.[24]

In 1873 there was a national depression that was felt in Jacksonville. The lumber mills managed to remain open by reducing their output. In 1876, the editor of the Jacksonville Tri-Weekly Sun and Press published the following editorial:

> The past three years have not been very prosperous to business men or the country at large. They have been distinguished by panics in the money market and by want of confidence in moneyed institutions. But this city shows a steady growth in spite of the hard times north. To supply the demand for additional accommodations on the river, two new steamboats were put on for the winter. . . . The manufacture of lumber during the hard times has been less than formerly;

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[22]T. F. Davis, p. 417.

[23]Ibid., p. 500.

[24]Ibid., p. 154.

> besides one mill was burned last summer. . . . Still the local trade has been sufficient to keep most of the mills running during the dull sale of lumber north. Many places on Bay Street where unsightly old rattletraps stood have yielded to the progress of events and brick buildings have been erected on the ground where they were so much of a nuisance.[25]

Bigelow describes the period from the end of the Civil War until 1876 as one in which Jacksonville's citizens tried to re-establish their city as it had been in 1861. After 1876, however, they again looked forward to an unknown future with confidence and optimism.

In conclusion, it is evident that Jacksonville, while not a boom town, grew and developed steadily throughout the years. An advantageous location made the city a center of commercial activity during peace and of military importance during war. In addition, the survival of the city, in spite of wars, epidemics, and fires, was in a large measure the result of the determined efforts of an enterprising citizenry, many of whom were from other sections of the country.

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[25] Ibid., p. 157.

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